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Canada and the IMCO

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Canada and the Intergovernmental Maritime Consultative Organization

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The Intergovernmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO) is the Specialized Agency of the United Nations exclusively concerned with shipping and maritime affairs.

Purpose and history

IMCO's main object is to promote co-operation among governments on technical matters affecting international shipping in order to achieve the highest practicable standards of maritime safety and efficiency of navigation, and prevention and control of marine pollution from ships.

The organization has a special responsibility for: safety at sea; protection of the marine environment by preventing pollution of the sea by ships and other craft; legal matters connected with international shipping; providing technical assistance in maritime matters to developing countries; co-operating with other international bodies on shipping matters and drafting international conventions and agreements on this subject; and co-ordinating its activities with other Specialized Agencies of the United Nations.

In 1948, the United Nations Maritime Conference in Geneva drafted a convention establishing IMCO. This instrument reflected the wish of maritime nations to consolidate the diverse forms of international co-operation that had grown up over the years in the world of shipping. The

IMCO convention required acceptance by 21 states, including seven with at least one million gross tons of shipping each.

Canada became the first to approve the proposed organization with the ratification of the convention on October 15, 1948. Japan deposited the twenty-first ratification on March 17, 1958. The first IMCO Assembly met in London in January 1959, and London became the permanent headquarters of IMCO.

In 1977, the Assembly adopted amendments to the constitution that will change IMCO's name to "International Maritime Organization".

Structure and activities

The organization consists of the Assembly, the Council, the Maritime Safety Committee, such subsidiary organs as may be considered necessary, and a Secretariat. IMCO convenes 34 meetings and two conferences a year. The *Assembly* is the supreme governing body of the organization. It determines the policy of the organization, decides on the work program and votes the budget. The Assembly approves all financial regulations and elects the member states to serve on the Council. It recommends for adoption regulations concerning safety that have been recommended to it by the Maritime Safety Committee. It also has responsibility for approving the appointment of the Secretary-General

of the organization. The Assembly is composed of all member states, and normally meets biennially. The first session was convened in 1959, and the tenth took place in November 1977.

The *Council* consists of representatives of 24 member states elected by the Assembly for a term of two years. It normally meets twice a year. It is IMCO's governing body between Assembly sessions. Canada has been a member of the Council since its first session in 1959.

The composition of the Council is as follows:

Category A — Governments of states with the largest interest in providing international shipping services (six representatives);

Category B — Governments of other states with the largest interest in international seaborne trade (six representatives);

Category C — Governments of states not elected under A or B that have special interest in maritime transport or navigation and whose election to the Council will ensure representation of all major geographical areas in the world (12 representatives).

The *Maritime Safety Committee*, which is open to all IMCO members, meets twice a year, elects its officers annually and adopts its own rules of procedure. This committee deals with all technical work, such as: aids to navigation; construction and equip-

ment of ships; rules for preventing collisions; the handling of dangerous cargoes; maritime-safety procedures and requirements; marine-casualty investigation; search and rescue; and any other matters directly affecting maritime safety. Canada has been a member since the first session of the committee.

The *Facilitation Committee*, which was created by the Council, meets annually and is open to all member states and states that are parties to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic, 1965. The purpose of this convention is to facilitate maritime transport by simplifying and reducing to a minimum the formalities and documentation requirements on the arrival, stay and departure of ships engaged in international voyages.

The *Secretariat* of IMCO consists of 206 employees divided among five divisions, and is headed by a Secretary-General.

Membership

Present IMCO membership stands at 110 full members, with one associate member. The membership includes ship-owning nations, countries using shipping services and developing countries.

Budget and finances

IMCO's budget for 1978-1979 amounts to \$12,661,300 (U.S.). Expenses are apportioned among the members on the basis of:

- (a) a fixed-sum payment determined by the percentage of the UN budget paid by the member;
- (b) a further payment derived from the member's total gross registered tonnage of shipping.

In 1978, Canada's contribution to the organization was \$45,019 (U.S.).

Major programs and priorities and means of action

The following are the major programs for the period 1978-82: Conference on Crew Training; Conference on Search-and-Rescue Systems; Legal Status of Air-Cushion Vehicles; Civil Liability for Pollution Damage from Substances other than Oil as Defined in the 1969 Convention on Civil Liability for Oil-Pollution Damage; Wreck Removal and Related Issues; Regime of Vessels in Foreign Ports; Safety of Novel-Type Craft; Establishment of International Legal Machinery to Combat Marine Pollu-

tion from Ships and Other Vessels; Jurisdiction in Respect of Collisions at Sea and Other Maritime Incidents; and Arrest of Sea-Going Ships.

The organization has adopted conventions dealing with safety, pollution prevention, legal matters and the facilitation of maritime trade. Of 18 conventions, 12 are already in force.

Canada was the first country to accept the convention to establish the Intergovernmental Maritime Consultative Organization. Since IMCO's creation in 1958, Canada has participated actively in the organization and has continuously held a seat on the Council and on the Maritime Safety Committee.

Purposes of Canadian membership

Canada's aims as an IMCO member are:

- (a) To further the aims of the organization and ensure that Canadian interests are brought to the attention of member states engaged in debating international maritime rules;
- (b) to influence decisions regarding maritime standards in the best interests of Canada;
- (c) to maintain close communication with international marine experts so that Canada is aware of world-wide trends and developments.

Programs of interest

Maritime Safety Committee — Priorities have not been assigned to the list of items being examined by the MSC; however, it is considered that matters dealing directly with the safety of the ship and its crew should be paramount.

Technical expertise is supplied by Transport Canada officials, who attend all international meetings of the Maritime Safety Committee and its 12 technical subcommittees.

Other programs of interest are listed in order of Canadian priority:

Marine Environment Protection Committee — solution of technical problems involved in implementation of the 1973 Marine Pollution Convention, including examination of the problem in relation to the protection of the marine environment in

special areas, and development of suitable procedures for the enforcement of the conventions relating to marine pollution.

Specific subjects — review of technical problems associated with the implementation of the 1969 amendments to the 1954 Oil-Pollution Convention, the 1973 Marine-Pollution Convention and an instrument and resolutions to be adopted by the International Conference on Tanker Safety and Pollution Prevention, 1978; an oil-discharge monitoring system, particularly for light refined oils; procedures for the control of ships; penalties for infringement of the convention; identification of the source of discharged oil; categorization of liquid substances; and procedures and arrangements for the discharge of noxious liquids.

Facilitation Committee — monitors the status of the convention and its annex; conducts the facilitation activities within the organization, including promotional activities, in cooperation with member governments, contracting governments, and other organizations; considers proposed amendments to the convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic and/or its annex; considers formalities connected with the arrival, stay and departure of cargo, ships and persons; considers

governments' information on implementation of individual provisions of the annex to the convention; and considers facilitation aspects of forms and certificates emanating from other activities of the organization.


Representation and personnel

The Department of Transport has primary responsibility for representing Canada at IMCO meetings. At present one Canadian is employed in the IMCO Secretariat, as Director of Administration.

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As the nation with the world's longest coastline and as a major user of shipping, Canada has a vital interest in international seaborne trade, in the safety of life at sea, in the safe and efficient operation of ships in its waters and in the prevention of pollution of the marine environment. This interest is reflected in the participation in IMCO meetings and in the number of papers submitted for consideration by IMCO member states.

IMCO is of great value to Canada and the international community as the forum for co-ordination, direction and dissemination of world-wide research and development in marine matters.



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